7/13/67

Dear Maggie,

As late as early June Random House was still pretending they were doing your book. At the American Booksellers Association annual convention I approached the pr people of RH and Bobbs Merrill and offered to each to do anything I could to help your book and Sylvia's without at the same time promoting my own. Each, after initial surprise, expressed satisfaction. One of the men from the editorial department at the RH booth came over to say that things were changing and they might be interested in my future work. I laughed and referred him to my agent, who also believed there might have been a change in RH attitude and figured that some time in the future there might be an interest in doing my work in hard covers.

When my agent heard nothing from them I began to have misgivings about their attitude, for it is not often a competitor offers to help. However, at the ABA meeting, rather than telling me they broke their contract, they said they were having mechanical troubles. Rather dishonest, all in all.

Your question about Willis and Bogard reminds me again that I forget too much. I thought I'd told you about Willis. About Bogard, I noted the significance and, because of delay in writing about it and having no time for notes, I forgot all about it until Sylvia reminded me of it after getting FW. Willis fits with both. I told LIFE he had pictures not in evidence. They didn't know it, although they are now preparing (and working hard and expensively) a story on unseen pictures. By a complete fluke, Willis got a copy of WHITEWASH II, liked what I said about him, understood how right I was, and phoned me. Among other things he told me his wife saw the President's head snap back, that she was standing opposite the car at the moment and he always (but no longer) wondered why she had not been called as a witness. He agreed to show all his pix to Billings, who arranged for plane fare and two nights at a hotel in NYC. I had a long talk to Willis, trying to explain to him that his schmalz was of little value, despite his high opinion of it, and that what he would not understand if he saw it could be of value. Knowing Willis' well-established belief, that anything is of greater value if it is his, I carefully explained that he could not expect a big price on immediate demand, that as time went on and more came out his pictures would be of less value, and that if he and Billings did not come to an immediate agreement it would be to his benefit to trust LIFE with copies for study, for the more they studied them the better the chance of finding something of worth for which they would pay. I told him they could not steal his property and if they did, he'd get more than he could any other way. Then, to be sure there was no hitch, I phoned Billings and told him to give this assurance and make the request. He laughed, thanked me, and said he would, at which point Willis walked into his office and I hung up. Because S had jogged my mind and fearing I'd not be able to get through to Billings in time, I asked her, knowing Willis' schedule, to phone B first think the next am and she did. He was unaware of the Bogard angle. So, she and I both asked him to question Willis on this and try and get a statement (I have also written Mrs. W., but without response. I wish Walker would endorse the Garrison probe a little louder so all the radical right would know it.) Billings then went to New Orleans and I've spoken to him but briefly. He went there instead of DC, where we were to have met the end of this week. I do not know what evolved. I think Willis recalled seeing Bogard that day. ... There is more exciting news, however. James Harris and Dick Sprague got interested in my call from Mrs, Billy Lovelady (FW 294) and started going over pictures. The found one, unmistakable, profile, of her Billy in exactly the shirt she described within 10 minutes of the assassination and not the shirt in the door way.

Again I got Dick next am before he could get too busy after time out of the office and got his assurance they would pursue this, try and get performance out of Mrs. BNL based on her promise to me, for which they will pay he, a great and consuming interest of hers, as she makes bluntly CRITAL you understand. I told him if I did not have this assurance I's shop around and I thought I knew some European publications that would be interested. He agreed. Meanwhile, the night before, I got Dick to promise that he'd make no cash offer to her and would stay away. To Jones I added the assurance that she had made certain I knew she detested him because he plagued them. She was proud of having his photographer arrested. First, I think we should not pay money. Second, we cannot offer much. Besides, she'll sell to LIFE when she'll sell to no one else. I really think this is our best chance of getting their signature on the statement the FBI never asked him to wear the shirt he wore that day and the picture of him in the shirt she said she put away and he had since worn but once (I suspect for CBS, who I let know in advance I'd denounce the picture they took of him in the doorway unless they assured me they'd gotten Altgens' camera and lens or at least used another 105mm lens, which I knew they hadn't).

Billings has a man in Dallas and so has Jim C. I gave Billings some stuff from Castorr that he turned over to C's man without identifying his source. We can get things done this way, so I do them. There are other evidences of Billings' goo faith. Besides, I have things and knowledge that help him and he wants and gets them. I'll keep you posted, but aside from Bill, say nothing of my of this. Let's succeed first.

Don't feel badly about not telling me of the RH cancellation because, since there is nothing you want me to do, it makes no difference. We all forget, I suspect I more than most now. My body is just that much too tired. I'm glad you expect the roadblocks, for it is now tougher. Except for the NYTimes, I've been greeted by total silence. The Times was very good, 44 Sunday news inches in a fair story.

I'll be at the archives within five days, probably Wednesday, when I expect some Xeroxing to be done. I'll get what you want. It is really no trouble. Also I'm going to get a 3M machine that will make clearer copies, including pages from a book, and I'll be able to make better copies of what I have if you should want it. The problem here is that I am now rushing the posting up of my next two books and the appendix to the NO book. I have something on the car that I'll try and remember to send you, a staff memo saying the real artcile is the one that should have been used. I'm glad you are going into this. I alsways wanted to but always found something else of higher priority. Please tell me the title of your book so I can make reference to it in mine. I really know nothing of the content of either of your books, although I know S has a false Oswald chapter.

I so wish I had a couple of bright law-student helpers to go to the archive now. The two remaining books to come from WWIII are what will remain and one on the autopsy and pix and X-rays. The appendix, before I finish it, is already 300 pages, so I have to break it up. I think the aut. stuff, which is extensive, will do it. I also hope this new one sells so I can afford to without going deeper into debt. I think without real promotion now it will be tougher for several reasons, especially the counter-campaign and the consumer feeling that having read a seemingly thorough book he has read all. How fast I'll be able to bring the next out depends upon Parallax, from whom I've heard nothing. If I do not have assurance very soon that they are proceeding with all possible haste, I'll withdraw the book and do it myself. I then, if they are proceeding, have to decide whether I can make a simultaneous compelete book, with appendix, which will be as large as Shirer's. But I'm preparing. I've pasted up more than 100 appendix pages and fear the total will exceed 400. After I get it made up, I have to annotate. Much work...Before I quit to hear Garrison on NBC, when you and Bill get around, please take note if PW is on sale & display. I've given the wholesaler a flyer for store windows. Thanks for your very kind words. Best to you all.